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ABSTRACT

This executive summary discusses the methodology and findings of a survey of participation in sport by school-age young people in the Australian Capital Territory school system. The sample included 525 males and 523 females in grades kindergarten to 12. The survey assessed participation in 25 sports in 4 different contexts (playing sport in classtime at school, with family or friends, for their school, and for a sporting club). The survey also assessed favored leisure activities, reasons for playing their favorite sport, feelings when playing sports, perceived benefits of playing a sport, sporting heroes and heroines, watching sporting events, and sporting facilities. The most frequently played sports in classtime at school were aerobics/gymnastics, cricket/kanga cricket, volleyball, softball, and soccer/roo ball. The most frequently cited sports when playing sports for their school were swimming, netball/netta netball, soccer/roo ball, athletics, softball, and cricket/kanga cricket. When playing with family or friends, the most popular sports were bicycle riding, swimming, skating, tennis/ace tennis, and horseback riding. In playing sport for a sporting club, the most frequently chosen sports were athletics/little athletics, soccer/roo ball, swimming, aerobics/gymnastics, tennis/ace tennis, netball/netta netball, and cricket/kanga cricket. (JDD)

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ED 366 566

A MAPPING OF PARTICIPATION RATES IN JUNIOR SPORT IN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

A PROJECT SPONSORED BY THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY JUNIOR SPORT COUNCIL WITH SUPPORT FROM THE A.C.T. OFFICE OF SPORT AND RECREATION, THE A.C.T. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION

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J.R. Clough and R.D. Traill
October 1992

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Background

At the request of the Australian Capital Territory (A.C.T.) Junior Sport Council a survey of participation in sport by school age young people was carried out during May and June 1992 by Associate Professor Jim Clough and Professor Ron Traill of the University of Canberra with the assistance of Ms Coralie McCormack, Research Officer for the project.

Major aims of the survey were to determine not only the extent of young people's participation in sport in the A.C.T. but also to explore what motivates young people to play or not to play sport. Other issues explored included which particular sports young people play, how sport rates as a leisure activity compared to other leisure activities and who are the sporting heroes and heroines of young people in the A.C.T.

2. The Sample

The study aimed to survey 1040 young people, 80 at each of the 13 year levels (kindergarten to year 12) of the A.C.T. school system. Equal numbers of males and females at each year level were sought, and one school from each A.C.T. schools' sports association zone was chosen to provide a geographical balance. Approximately one third of the schools chosen were independent schools, so that the survey reflected the proportion of such schools in the A.C.T. community. Random selection procedures were used throughout.

No attempt was made to sample young people from within the age groups who did not attend school. Minor variations to the proposed sample occurred for reasons beyond the control of the investigators, but it is unlikely that these have biased the results. The final sample size was 525 males and 523 females making a total of 1048.

3. Data Collection

The same 20 page questionnaire was completed by all of the young people, with the youngest primary school children receiving assistance from older children in their school who had completed the questionnaire and who had received some additional guidance from the research assistants. This process proved to be a cost effective means of obtaining the information. The questionnaire contained eighteen items, many with sub-items, thus making available a considerable amount of data on young people's participation in and views on sport.

4. Participation in Different Sports

Young people's participation in 25 different sports, most of which had one or more modified versions, in four different contexts was assessed.

4.1 In Classtime at School

The most frequently noted sports played in classtime at school were aerobics/gymnastics /gym fun (55%), cricket/kanga cricket (50%), volleyball and softball (both 46%) and soccer/roo ball (45%).

Aerobics/gymnastics /gym fun (57%), soccer/roo ball (53%) and cricket/kanga cricket (52%) were the most popular sports played by males in classtime at school. Aerobics/gymnastics /gym fun, (53%) cricket/kanga cricket (48%) and volleyball (47%) were the most popular sports played by females in classtime at school.

4.2 Representing School

The most frequently cited sports when playing sport for their school were swimming (22%), netball/netta netball and soccer/roo ball (both 18%), athletics (17%), softball (14%) and cricket/kanga cricket (12%).

Males cited soccer/roo ball (24%) and swimming (22%) as the sports most frequently played for their school. Females had most frequently represented their school in netball/netta netball (32%) and swimming (21%).

4.3 With Family or Friends

When playing with family or friends the most popular sports were bicycle riding (78%), swimming (70%), skating (60%), tennis/ace tennis (50%) and horse riding (39%).

For males the most popular sports played with family or friends were bicycle riding (76%), swimming (64%) and tennis (54%). The most popular sports females played with their family or friends were bicycle riding (80%), swimming (77%) and skating (67%).

Sports Played by Context: Percent of All Students (N=1048)

Sport	Playing Sport in Classtime at School (%)	Playing Sport with Family or Friends (%)	Playing Sport for their School (%)	Playing Sport for a sporting club (%)
Aerobics/ Gymnastics, Gym Fun	55	19	7	18
Athletics, Little Athletics	35	16	17	20
Australian Football, Aussie Footy	28	21	10	10
Baseball	29	18	5	6
Basketball, Mini-ball	38	30	10	11
Bicycle Riding	10	78	2	3
Cricket, Kanga Cricket	50	37	12	13
Golf	6	35	1	3
Hockey, Minkey	35	12	10	7
Horse Riding	7	39	1	6
Lacrosse, Softcrosse	15	3	1	0
Netball, Netta Netball	35	19	18	14
Orienteering	19	11	3	2
Rugby League, Mod League	26	31	7	8
Rugby Union, Walla Rugby	23	18	9	6
Skating	14	60	1	4
Skiing	7	33	2	2
Soccer, Roo Ball	45	37	18	19
Softball	46	22	14	7
Squash, Mini Squash	16	24	2	3
Swimming	42	70	22	19
Tee-ball	44	17	8	5
Tennis, Ace Tennis	29	50	5	15
Touch Football	40	34	5	3
Volleyball	46	27	8	3

Sports Played by Context and Gender: Percent (Males=525, Females=523)

Sport	In Classtime at School (%)		With Family or Friends (%)		For the School (%)		For a Sporting Club (%)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Aerobics/ Gymnast-ics	57	53	12	26	5	8	9	26
Athletics, Little Athletics	34	35	16	16	18	16	21	19
Australian Football	35	22	30	13	18	2	18	2
Baseball	31	27	24	12	5	5	10	2
Basketball	40	35	37	22	12	9	13	9
Bicycle Riding	11	10	70	80	4	1	4	2
Cricket, Kanga Cricket	52	48	48	27	16	7	23	2
Golf	8	5	45	26	1	0	5	1
Hockey, Minkey	33	36	14	10	8	11	8	7
Horse Riding	6	7	28	51	0	2	2	9
Lacrosse, Soficrosse	14	15	4	2	1	1	1	0
Netball	27	44	10	28	4	32	3	24
Orient-eering	18	19	13	5	2	3	2	3
Rugby League,	40	12	46	16	13	1	15	1
Rugby Union	32	14	28	8	16	2	11	1
Skating	13	15	53	67	1	1	2	5
Skiing	6	7	35	32	2	2	2	2
Soccer	53	37	52	22	24	12	33	4
Softball	47	46	26	19	11	16	6	7
Squash	17	15	30	18	3	1	5	2
Swimm-ing	45	40	64	77	22	21	18	20
Tee-ball	44	43	19	14	4	11	3	7
Tennis	29	29	54	45	6	4	17	14
Touch Football	51	28	49	20	7	3	5	1
Volleyball	44	47	30	24	7	10	3	3

4.4 Representing a Sporting Club

In playing sport for a sporting club the most frequently chosen sports were athletics/little athletics (20%), soccer/roo ball and swimming (both 19%), aerobics/gymnastics/gym fun (18%), tennis/ace tennis (15%), netball/netta netball (14%) and cricket/kanga cricket (13%).

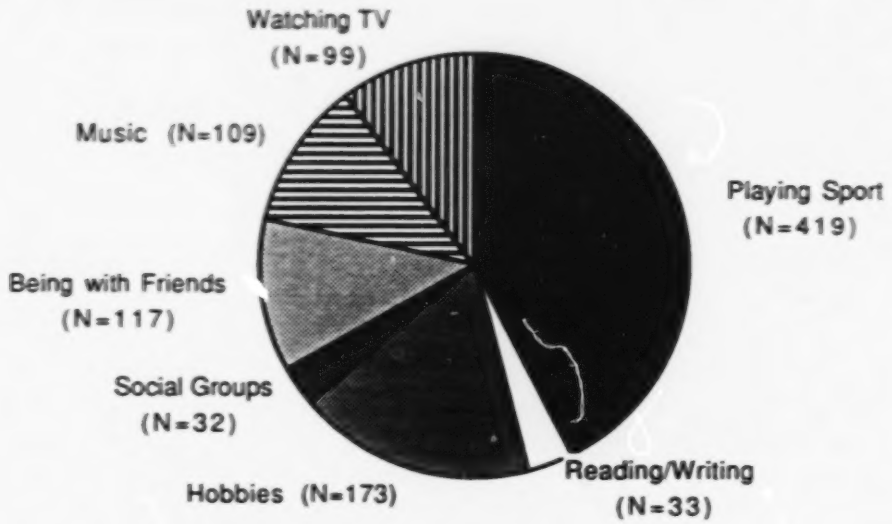
The popular winter codes of Australian football/Aussie footy (10%), rugby league/mod league (8%) and rugby union/walla rugby (6%) were not highly chosen as club sports, in part because of the low involvement of females in these codes and perhaps because participation by males was spread over these three codes.

Soccer/roo ball and cricket/kanga cricket were the most popular competitive club sports for males, with aerobics/gymnastics/gym fun and netball/netta netball the most popular for females.

5. Favoured Leisure Activities

Playing sport was ranked number one more often than any other leisure activity. Of the seven leisure activities listed, playing sport was most frequently ranked first by males, and ranked equal first (with being with friends) for females. When males and females responses were grouped, the order of preference from highest to lowest was playing sport, being with friends, hobbies, watching television, playing or listening to music, reading or writing, and going to scouts, guides, or a church or social group.

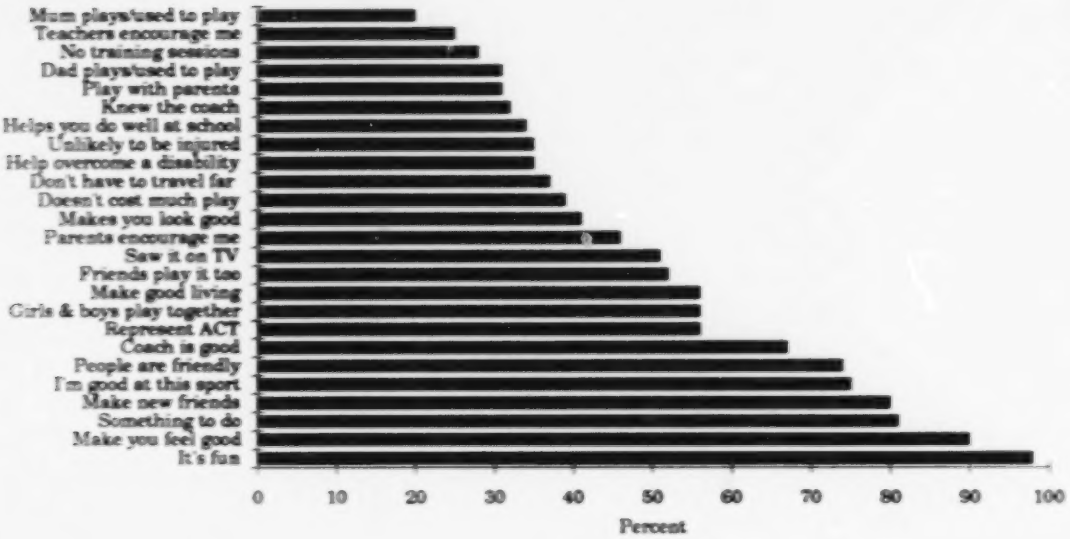
Favoured Leisure Activities (N=982)



6. Reasons for Playing Favourite Sport

When asked why they played their favourite sport, 98% of these young people indicated that it was because "It's fun". Other strongly chosen responses were "It makes you feel good" (90%), "Something to do" (81%), "You make new friends that way" (80%) and "I am really good at this sport" (75%).

Reasons Students Play their Favourite Sport



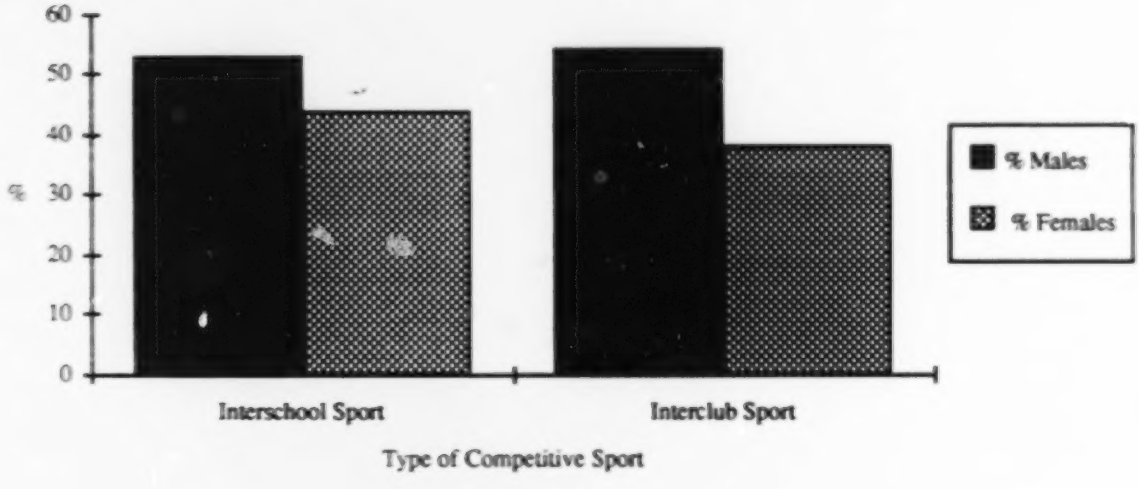
7. Competitive Interschool Sport

About equal numbers of students had represented and not represented their school in a sporting team in competition against another school in 1991 or 1992. A larger proportion of males (53.3%) than females (44.0%) represented their school. These representatives on average practised twice a week with their school sports team, for a total of two and a half hours a week.

8. Competitive Interclub Sport

About the same proportion of males (54.1%) had played for a community club in competition against another club as had represented their school, but fewer females (37.4%) had done so. Students playing for community clubs practise on average two and a half times a week, for a total of 3.3 hours a week. Their coach was most frequently a player from the local club team (28.9%) or a parent (25.8%).

Percent of Students Playing Competitive Sport by Gender



9. Feelings When Playing Sport in Different Contexts

When they were asked how they felt when they played sport in four different contexts students agreed that fun was the major characteristic in all four settings except playing sport for a sporting club, where excitement was rated first and fun second. Excitement was rated second in playing sport with family or friends and playing sport for their school, but third for playing sport in classtime at school. Developing skill was rated third for all contexts other than playing sport in classtime at school where it was rated second. Thus fun, excitement and developing skills were the perceived concomitants of sport in all four contexts with only the order changing. The least noted concomitant was boring (ranked 11th except in classtime in school where it was 8th), with the next lowest being "dangerous".

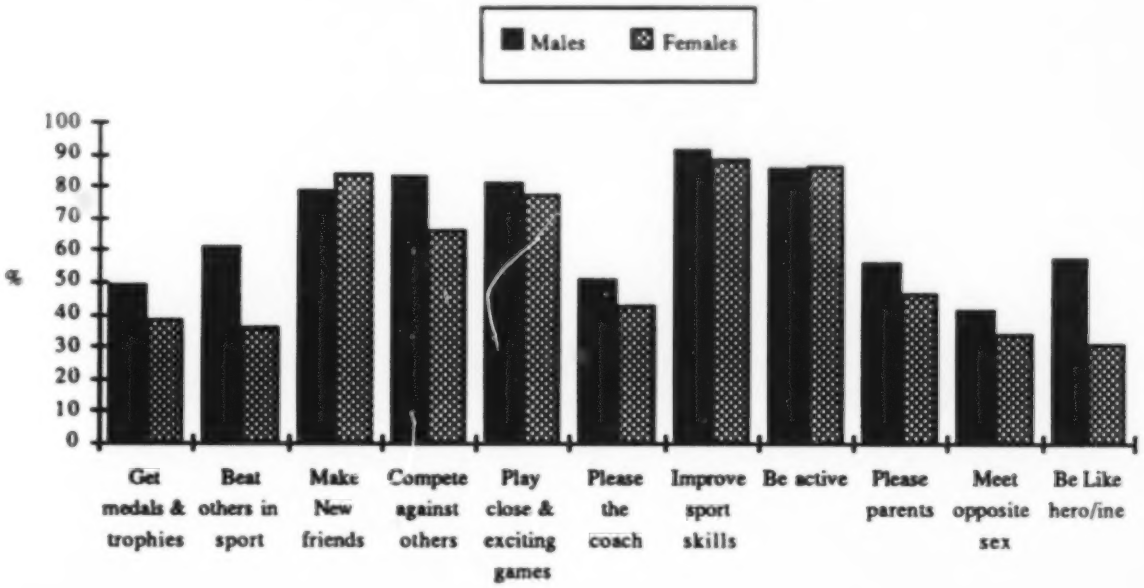
Students' Feelings about Playing Sport in Different Contexts : Percent (Males=525, Females=523)

How children felt about playing sport	Playing Sport in Classtime at School (%)	Playing Sport with Family or Friends (%)	Playing Sport for their School (%)	Playing Sport for a sporting club (%)
Excited	44	63	56	64
Too Organised	27	11	18	21
Boring	29	10	12	10
Fun	62	80	57	61
Satistying	40	50	43	47
Too many rules	30	12	22	21
Dangerous	17	16	15	19
Others take it too seriously	42	20	31	32
Too competitive	21	13	26	28
Challenging	38	40	49	58
Develops Skills	56	48	49	59

10. Perceived Benefits of Playing Sport

When asked why they played sport, males and females agreed that improving their sporting skills (90%), being physically active (85%) and making new friends (81%) were important. Males were more concerned with the competitive aspects of sport, with a higher proportion of boys than girls playing sport to compete against others (83% for males and 66% for females), or to beat them (61% for males and 36% for females). Being like their sporting heroes was more important to males (57%) than females (31%). Meeting members of the opposite sex was relatively unimportant as a reason for playing sport, although the percentage did tend to rise with age.

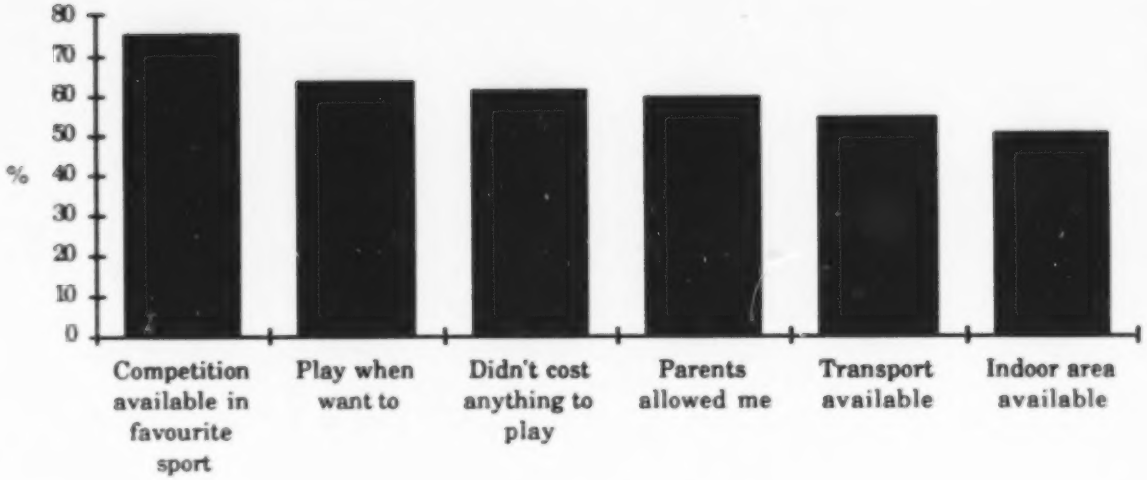
Reasons for Playing Sport by Gender



11. Increasing Participation in Sport

Young people indicated that they would play more sport if there was a competition available in one of their favourite sports in which they could do well. Freedom to play when they wanted to was a consideration for more than half the respondents, and particularly for the older ones, while cost was also a consideration. For young children, parental permission was a major consideration.

Students' Reasons for Playing More Sport



12. Discouragement from Playing Sport

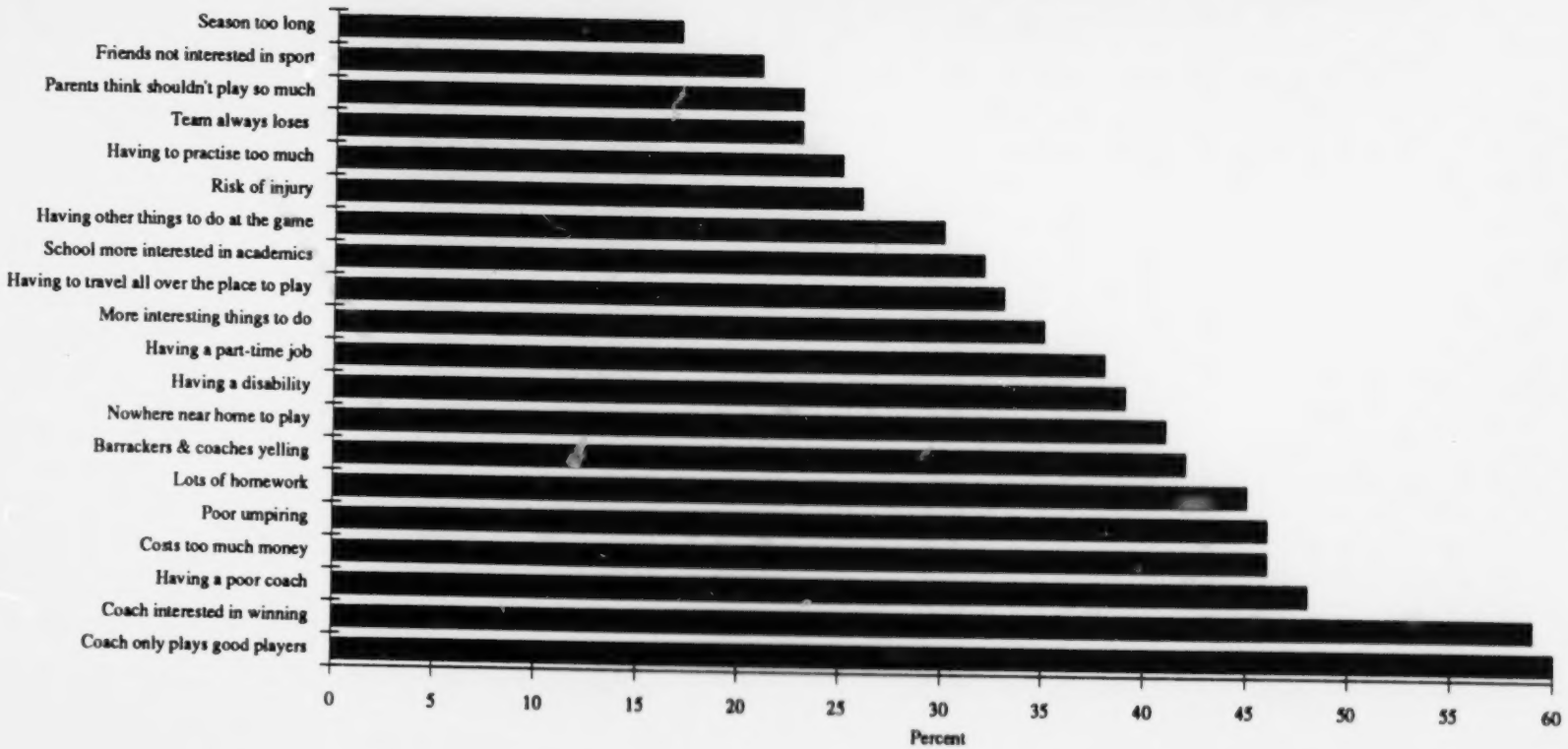
Overwhelmingly, factors associated with the coach would most discourage young people from playing sport, with "the coach only putting the good players into the game so that I miss out" (60%), "the coaches not really being interested in the players, but just being interested in winning" (59%) and "having a poor coach" (48%) being the most highly ranked choices. Costing too much money and poor umpiring (both 46%) and studies (45%) were the next most highly chosen.

13. Sporting Heroes / Heroines

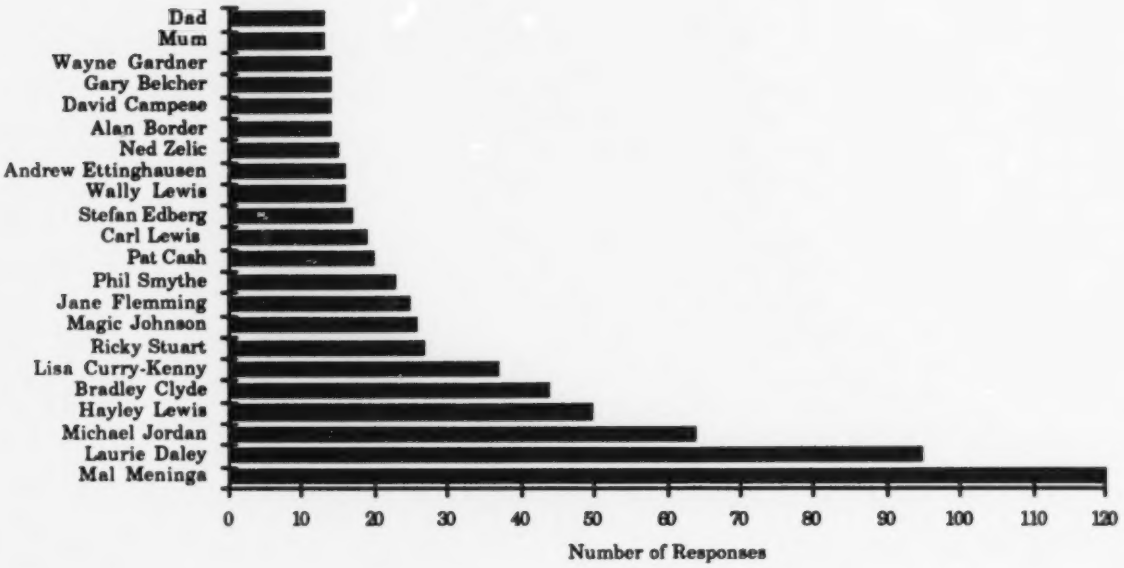
Almost three quarters of students had one or more sporting heroes or heroines, with over 700 heroes or heroines being named. Mal Meninga was most frequently chosen, followed by Laurie Daley, Michael Jordan, Hayley Lewis and Bradley Clyde. Three of the top ten were women, with two of the top ten being United States basketball players. Just failing to make the top twenty were mum and dad, equal at twenty first. Generally, students saw their sporting heroes and heroines as determined, committed leaders who exhibited desirable physical features such as speed and strength. Those students with sporting heroes or heroines were evenly divided between those who felt their sporting heroes or heroines had influenced their sporting choices and those who felt they had not.

The fact that the questionnaire was completed in May and June, during the winter sporting season and during the lead up to the Barcelona Olympic Games, has probably influenced the order of choice.

Reasons Students Would Be Discouraged from Playing Sport



Most Popular Sporting Heroes and Heroines



14. Watching Sporting Events

About one quarter of the young people never attend a sporting event; however, about one third attend once or twice a year, about one fifth attend once a month, and another one fifth attend once a week. Just over half of the young people would prefer to attend live sporting events than watch them on television, while another quarter would sometimes prefer to attend rather than watch sports events on television. The distribution was very similar for males and females, but older students were more likely to want to be there than younger students.

15. Provision of Sporting Facilities

Almost four fifths of those surveyed were satisfied with the sporting facilities that were available to them. Of the few students who felt sporting facilities were insufficient, most expressed their needs at a general level, for example, "better grounds", better equipment", "better grandstands", "better changerooms" or "bigger gyms". Having courts close to home was important for some, while older students preferred larger regional facilities.

16. The Data Base

The number of variables contained in the questionnaire makes it a complex task to report cross tabulations on variables other than age and gender; however, since the data is entered into a computer data base it is relatively easy to carry out such analyses on a fee for service basis.

17. Need for Further Research

This research aimed to describe the level of involvement of school age young people in sport and attitudes and feelings about sport. This report details differences in involvement, attitudes and feelings according to gender and year level; the data base also contains information concerning ethnic background, geographical area of the ACT, public vs private school attendance and a variety of other variables, any of which can be further analysed. However, this project provides only limited evidence as to **why** the trends in the data exist. There is a need, through the employment of other research methodologies to answer such questions as why the participation rates of females differ from those of males and why some sports are popular in one context but not in another, in order that programs can be varied to maximise young people's participation in and benefit from sport.